



# BERRIEN COUNTY 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

## MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR



Despite the ongoing pandemic of 2021, Michigan State University Extension continued to work for Berrien County youth, adults, businesses and communities providing outstanding research-based education and community development programs.

With the learning curve of online programming behind us, we continued to expand and perfect our digital educational offerings.

Considering the health and safety of participants, many of our face-to-face programs provided both an in-person and remote option to participate. Our educators found creative ways to offer outdoor programs and engage with schools and community groups while maintaining social distancing.

This report highlights only some of the accomplishments of 2021. Be sure to take a glance at the appendix also provided to see the breadth of programs that your county residents attended.

Please reach out to me or anyone from MSU Extension with ideas for programs, contacts for new partners or feedback on our work. It takes all of us to bring the best programming to the district.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support of MSU Extension in the county.

*Julie Pioch, District 13 Director*

## BERRIEN STAFF

### Deb Barrett

Career Exploration Senior Educator  
[smithde6@msu.edu](mailto:smithde6@msu.edu)

### Zelda Felix-Mottley

Health & Nutrition Educator  
[mottley@msu.edu](mailto:mottley@msu.edu)

### Elizabeth Ferry

Swine Educator  
[franzeli@msu.edu](mailto:franzeli@msu.edu)

### Clara Jungermann

4-H Program Coordinator  
[jungerma@msu.edu](mailto:jungerma@msu.edu)

### Mike Reinke

Integrated Pest Management Educator  
[reinkem3@msu.edu](mailto:reinkem3@msu.edu)

### Bill Shane,

Extension Specialist &  
Coordinator SW Michigan Research  
and Extension Center  
[shane@msu.edu](mailto:shane@msu.edu)

### Kelly Stelter

4-H Program Coordinator  
[grandtke@msu.edu](mailto:grandtke@msu.edu)

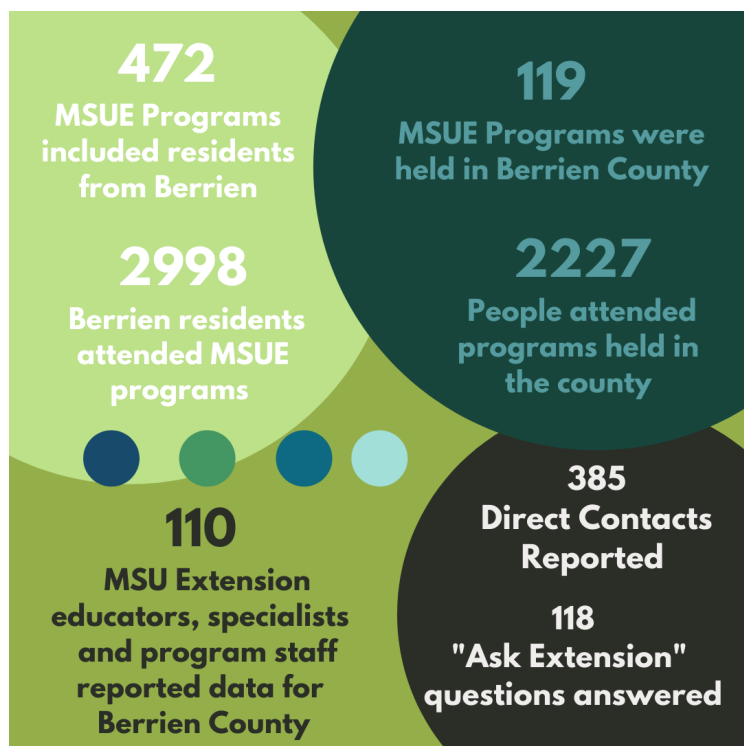
### Jamie Styburski

Secretary  
[styburs1@msu.edu](mailto:styburs1@msu.edu)

### Yolanda Thrash

Community Nutrition Instructor  
[thrash@msu.edu](mailto:thrash@msu.edu)

## BY THE NUMBERS



BERRIEN COUNTY GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION	2019	2020	2021
	\$298,614	\$307,609	\$309,045

## CONTACT US

MSU Extension – Berrien County  
1737 Hillandale Rd.  
Benton Harbor, MI 49022  
269-927-5674  
<https://www.canr.msu.edu/berrien>



## 4-H AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

In 2021, there were 315 youth enrolled in 28 traditional Berrien 4-H Youth clubs. In addition, it was reported that an additional 1125 young people participated in programs designed for youth and hosted in Berrien county.

In order to maintain a high-quality program that is safe and welcoming to all youth, much of the 4-H program coordinators' time is spent recruiting, training and coaching our volunteers. In 2021, there were 104 adult and 46 youth volunteers enrolled in the program. To equip our volunteer leaders with tools to manage conflict, each leader was required to participate in a short online training in order to stay in good standing this year.

### SCIENCE LITERACY IN THE CLASSROOM

In her first three months as a 4-H program coordinator, Clara Jungermann collaborated with the Berrien County Leaders Council to purchase 30 Galactic Quest National Science Day STEM kits. Each reusable kit contains four activities focused on different science topics. Berrien RESA informed principals, teachers, and counselors about the Galactic Quest kit availability on a first-come, first-served basis. Twenty-five individuals from six schools and one foster care support group responded to serve 134 youths. The remaining five kits are on hand at the Berrien County Extension office for Extension staff programming and 4-H club use.

The 4-H Embryology program, focuses on the development of chicken eggs. An online, on-demand course was designed to provide support for teachers, homeschool groups, community partners, and 4-H leaders interested in teaching youth about the science of hatching eggs. Three teachers from Berrien County took advantage of this hands-on program for their classrooms reaching 52 students. One of the participants from Lybrook Elementary School who participated in the in-school program held Spring 2021, was able to take home four of the chicks that were hatched. By Fall the chickens were mature enough to start laying eggs. She decided to take the eggs from her chickens and start selling them to local friends and family for \$3.00 a dozen. She is currently learning about being an entrepreneur, has set goals and hopes to make enough profit so that she can go to Disney.

### 4-H GIVES BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Two 4-H community service projects led by Kelly Stelter, 4-H Program Coordinator were successful not only for their outcomes for the community but also were a great way to safely engage 4-H clubs in 2021. From March through May, Berrien 4-H held a friendly competition with Van Buren 4-H to collect the most plastic caps to be recycled into benches, tables, garden planters, and then donated back to the local community. Over 970 pounds of plastic was collected that would have ended up in a landfill. Berrien County 4-H won the competition and collected 706 pounds of plastic equaling 4.5 benches! Clubs worked with local businesses to establish drop off locations. High achievers were the River Valley Wranglers 4-H Club who collected 561 pounds of caps from just the Three Oaks area.

For the 4<sup>th</sup> year in a row, in collaboration with Berrien Farm Bureau, Farm Bureau Insurance Agent Charitable Fund, and Southwest Michigan Collegiate Farm Bureau, 4-H Clubs participated in the Thanks 4 Giving service project. In 2021, 110 baskets with at least 35 pounds of food plus vouchers for milk and butter from local grocery stores were distributed to families in need over the Thanksgiving holiday.



*Volunteers work with a new member of the We Can Ride 4-H Club. Initially afraid of her horse, this rider eased into the program with guidance on petting and grooming the horse. After two weeks, she participated in the showmanship portion of the class where she led her horse around the ring. Halfway through the club's riding season, she was comfortable enough to mount the horse and At the end of the season, she participated in the fair's PEP Show and won second in her class as well as an award for most improved rider!*



*Galactic Quest Science kits on hand for 4-H club use.*



*Food baskets for delivery.*



## AGRICULTURE

### MI AG IDEAS TO GROW WITH

MSU Extension agriculture educators rose to the challenge in 2021 in being able to continue to pivot their traditional educational efforts to methods that would provide clientele with access to programs and information from their homes or offices. One significant effort developed to meet this need was the MI Ag Ideas to Grow With virtual conference.

This unique event combined the annual events of Ag Action Day, Branch County Farmers Day, and Southwest Michigan Horticulture Days into a week-long virtual program. It featured subject matter tracks from livestock production, fruit and vegetable production, sustainability, soil health and irrigation to horticulture and home gardening. A track was also offered for youth participants. In all, 55 different education sessions were offered.

Each day focused on specific topics with sessions occurring at the top of every hour. The horticulture, home gardening and animal agriculture sessions were featured daily throughout the week. Educators worked with state officials to make it possible for attendees to receive RUP and CCA credits for eligible sessions.

While this program was developed to provide access to education typically delivered at MSU Extension's in-person programming, the success of the virtual platform exceeded the expectations of the planning team. During the weeklong event participants from 47 counties in Michigan (including 37 from Berrien) attended sessions and over 980 sessions were accessed by clientele. Attendees included some who had not participated in the traditional in-person programs in the past.

*"Thank you so much for putting on this conference. I've attended the past few years and I always learn a lot. You guys do a really good job of providing various quality materials and knowledgeable speakers."*

### FIELD CROPS WEBINAR SERIES

With 754 registrants, it was a record year for the 2021 Field Crops Webinar series. Sixty-two percent of attendees were full time farmers and 25% were part time farmers. Eighty-seven percent of attendees reported they learned something new and 42% said they would make a change on their farm to manage risk and improve production efficiency on 295,366 acres. This totaled a financial impact of \$3,223,318 or an average of \$11/acre toward the change on their farm. What an amazing impact MSU Extension's six-part webinar series had on Michigan's field crop industry and Berrien County.

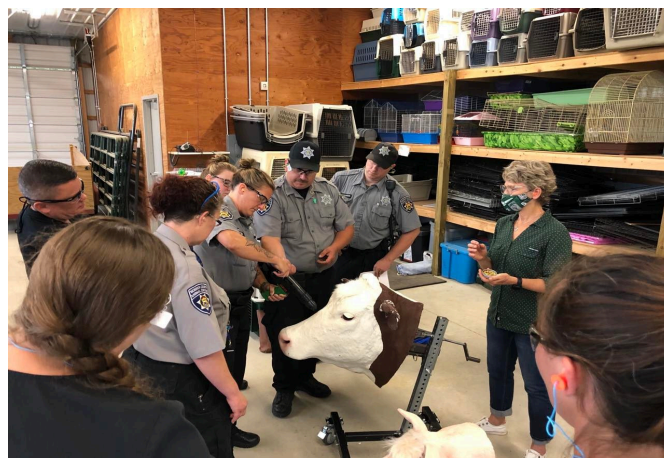
### BERRIEN ANIMAL CONTROL PARTNERS FOR EMERGENCY TRAINING

When working with animals, you have to expect the unexpected and be prepared for chaotic situations. The welfare of the animal is always a concern for the Berrien County Animal Control department, second only to the health and safety of the staff who are responsible for handling situations with animals - including livestock. Emergency responders have to be ready to respond to accidents involving both single animals and truckloads of animals.

In summer 2021 Berrien Animal Control director Tiffany Peterson worked with MSU Extension educator Beth Ferry to make sure that her team had training and proper equipment that may be needed in certain situations.

"Unfortunately, there are times that we have to make decisions based on what is in the best interest of an animal's welfare, those are not fun or easy decisions," says Ferry. "But having the right equipment and properly trained people make all the difference."

Peterson and Ferry worked together to source a properly sized captive bolt device that would be used if an animal needed to be euthanized out in the field. A captive bolt device is recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) as a humane piece of euthanasia equipment and one of the safest methods for those that are responsible for completing this process. MSU Experts, along with Ferry, provided training on the proper use, cleaning and handling of this piece of equipment.



*Staff from Berrien and Cass County Animal Control repeatedly used the captive bolt device to ensure that staff had an acceptable level of comfort with this new tool.*



## HORTICULTURE

### GREAT LAKES EXPO FACE TO FACE IN 2021

More than 2000 producers from around the country, including 113 from Berrien County attended the Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable & Farm Market EXPO and Michigan Greenhouse Growers Expo in Grand Rapids in December. For three days, producers attended sessions on fruit, vegetable, and specialty crops, greenhouse production, farming operations, and many more topics including farm labor and food safety. MSU Extension educators including Berrien County’s Mike Reinke had an instrumental role in organizing the event and presenting the latest scientific research, critically important to the Southwest Michigan fruit belt. More than 400 exhibitors were also in attendance to showcase products and encourage networking.

### PEACH RESEARCH AT SWMRC

MSU Extension researchers at the Southwest Michigan Research and Extension Center (SWMRC) hosted their annual peach meeting for Michigan and the Midwest USA virtually in 2021. This annual, premier event reached 64 growers - 24 from Berrien County. It focused on critical needs of the peach industry including the latest research on peach varieties, rootstocks, insect and disease management, labor, marketing strategies, chemical fruit thinning, tree training, and cold hardiness. The two-day meeting featured researchers from MSU, Clemson University and industry.

### EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER

Since 1978, well over 40,000 residents from 80 Michigan counties have been involved in the MSU Extension Master Gardener (EMG) Program. Through their volunteer outreach, EMGs share science-based, environmentally-sound gardening knowledge and engage citizens and empowered communities in the following areas: environmentally responsible gardening practices; improving food security; improving community and quality of life; and developing youth through gardening.

In spring of 2021, four new Extension Master Gardener trainees successfully completed their 13 week coursework and look forward to educating the public through interesting Berrien County gardening projects in 2022.

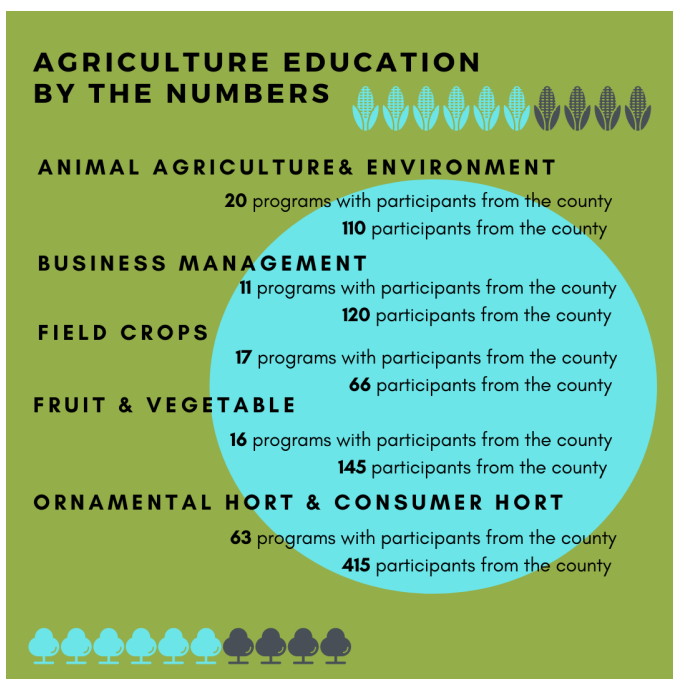
### WHAT IS “ASK EXTENSION”?

The infographic on the cover page of this report reads that Berrien had 118 “Ask Extension” inquiries answered. The explanation for the factoid is this:

MSU Extension’s “[Ask Extension](#)” is an online tool that can be used by community members to get answers from MSU Extension experts. Questions received have ranged from food safety, agriculture and gardening, to natural resources questions relating to frogs and snakes to land use and home ownership questions.

Once questions are submitted, they are “wrangled” by a team at MSU Extension and forwarded to the MSU expert who can answer the question. Questions come in from all around Michigan as well as from all over the county. With our national extension service network, some questions are even answered by colleagues from other universities when needed.

In 2021, MSU Extension staff have answered 8,500 questions - 163 MSU Extension experts and 26 Extension Master Gardeners participated. Since 2017, when the Ask Extension web presence was enhanced on the MSU Extension website, there has been a significant increase in the number of questions each year. Another contributing factor is the comprehensive effort by MSU Extension staff to promote this online tool through large events such as Home and Garden Shows, articles, email signatures, presentations, program related websites, and more.





## GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY VITALITY

*The MSU Extension Government and Community Vitality Team delivers high quality educational programs to community leaders and residents of Berrien County. They provide certification programs, group facilitation and one on one consulting and problem solving with community leaders and decision makers facing challenging issues.*



### CITIZEN PLANNER

The MSU Extension Citizen Planner (CP) program provides lay planners a unique program to learn the fundamentals of planning and zoning. Thousands of Michigan residents have graduated from the program since 1999. In 2021, 91 people participated in the CP program via Zoom and 206 completed the self-paced Citizen Planner Online (CPO) program. Thirteen graduates were from Berrien County. CP is a 6-week program with 18 hours of instruction. CPO is structured like a Netflix Series with two seasons, with 12 episodes per season. Comments from 2021 evaluations included:

*"This course was MAGNIFICENT!"*

*"Great class - recommend for any public official."*

*"This class will really help as we work through our solar ordinance and upcoming master plan update."*

### KEEPING ELECTED OFFICIALS IN THE KNOW

The Current Issues Affecting Michigan Local Governments Webinar Series was designed for elected and appointed officials at all levels of local government and their staffs, as well as any Michigan resident interested in learning about the biggest issues public officials are dealing with. MSU Extension partners with the Michigan Association of Counties and Michigan Townships Association and the MSU Extension Center for Local Government Finance and Policy to present community-engaging topics. Ten Berrien County participants joined more than 200 in attendance.

### ARPA FUNDS TRAINING

MSU Extension partnered with the Michigan Association of Regions to host 14 workshops around the state for local and tribal government officials to discuss American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund spending opportunities. Participants were able to attend the sessions in person or join remotely. The sessions covered ARPA fund basic rules, best practices and early examples of ARPA spending; practical considerations for contracts, accounting, and project management. Group discussion

centered on regional collaboration, leveraging funding sources and setting priorities. [Notes from the session can be found here.](#) This workshop series had over 750 participants from Michigan's units of government including more than 20 from Berrien County. When asked about the workshop one participant said:

*"Great job! I am thinking more broadly about ways to use our ARPA funds. I was very pleased with the attendance, facilitation, the information shared and received as well as the flow of the workshop. Thank you! I can think of many ways to use this extra revenue."*

### FINANCIAL BEST PRACTICES SERIES

Twenty-five Berrien County community leaders attended the four-part Fiscally Ready Communities series, created to assist communities that want to establish, measure, and maintain policies to increase operational and financial effectiveness and safeguards. MSU Extension and the Michigan Department of Treasury together in partnership help local governments work toward fiscal health by sharing best practices in fiscal sustainability. The series topics included: Financial Best Practices Overview, Budgeting for Fiscal Sustainability, Capital Asset Management and Planning, and Managing Internal Controls.

### ASSISTANCE TO THE CITY OF BRIDGMAN

In spring 2021, Bridgman City Manager reached out to MSU Extension for assistance with developing a community input survey regarding the municipalities approach to regulating marijuana establishments. MSU Extension educator Tyler Augst assisted the by reviewing the survey to ensure the instrument was not leading or confusing and offered suggestions to reduce double barreled questions using survey best practices. The survey was distributed to the community through a newsletter and results were discussed at the May Planning Commission meeting.

*"Thanks again for all of your excellent guidance on our marijuana survey. Our PC chair was very appreciative."* Juan Ganum



## HEALTH AND NUTRITION

### NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

With a focus on those eligible to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Benefits (SNAP), MSU Extension works in schools and community partners to bring nutrition and physical activity education to students, adults and seniors. The SNAP Education curriculum is an evidence-based program that helps people lead healthier lives, teaches people about good nutrition and how to make their food dollars stretch further.

In 2021, MSU Extension reached over 518 youth in series and one-time presentations including a youth series in partnership with the Berrien County Juvenile Center. In partnership with the Berrien County Health Department, MSU Extension Educator Zelda Felix-Motley engaged over 167 adults in the Senior Project Fresh Program.

An accolade for Yolanda Thrash, MSU Extension Community Nutrition Instructor from a teacher at Discovery Enrichment Center after a “Show Me Nutrition” series with 35 preschool students:

*“We have enjoyed our time with Mrs. Thrash for several years now. She brings the importance of good nutrition and physical activity to our preschool students each year for about 6 weeks. This year we were lucky to have her once again. There were some challenges with our having to do the instructions virtually this year. Fortunately, our students were still able to gain a fairly decent understanding of good nutrition and physical activity from the virtual presentations. Our students learned about different food groups, such as fruits, vegetables, and bread or grains. We finished our program up for this year back in*

### HEALTH TEAM

The MSU Extension Health team offers a variety of programs to help people learn to improve their lives through educational programs in social emotional issues, chronic disease, addiction and pain management. Two examples of programs that included Berrien residents in 2021 are:

**Mindfulness for Better Living** includes a suite of one-time workshops to help people learn ways to use mindfulness to manage everyday stress. Workshops across a variety of topics were offered throughout 2021 reached more than 67 Berrien residents. Mindfulness can be defined as paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally. Research has shown that practicing mindfulness is effective in reducing stress-related symptoms such as worry, depression and physical tension, and may be helpful in managing chronic conditions.

**Prediabetes** is a four-part educational series designed to help adults increase their prediabetes knowledge about and put healthy eating and exercise information into practice. People with prediabetes are more likely to develop heart disease and stroke. This series helps participants make modest behavior changes, such as improving food choices and increasing physical activity to at least 150 minutes per week, results in participants losing 5% to 7% of their body weight. These lifestyle changes reduced the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 58% in people at high risk for diabetes. Informational sessions and series reached 85 Berrien residents.

### FOOD SAFETY

In 2020, as the coronavirus pandemic progressed forcing people to stay home, interest in gardening and preserving food at home skyrocketed. This was seen by the great interest in MSU Extension online food preservation classes. Continuing into 2021, we recognized that online learning offers opportunities to reach more people with education on safe home food preservation practices. Distance learning can address the discrepancies caused by socioeconomic and geographic differences, schedules, and

ease of accessibility. MSU extension Food Preservation classes were offered from mid-January through early December 2021. Virtual classes includes a lesson, and a panel to answer consumer questions. In 2021, a variety of food preservation topics were covered in order to provide research-based education and resources to consumers on safely preserving food at home and the program. In total, the team reached 2,526 people in 50 food safety programs including 59 from Berrien County.